

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

*Defense*  
*Prisoner Of War /*  
*Missing Personnel*  
*Office*

**memorandum**



*Date:* 27 February 2009

*To:* LC

*From:* RA-SEA/Millner

*Subject:* Sen. Debbie Stabenow Constituent Reports Contact with Alleged American Serviceman

1. On 29 January 2009, Analyst received a request to contact Ms. Joann Papenfuss ([joann\\_papenfuss@stabenow.senate.gov](mailto:joann_papenfuss@stabenow.senate.gov), 231-929-1031), a staffer in Senator Debbie Stabenow's (Traverse City, MI) office, concerning information from a constituent concerning an alleged American serviceman found in Vietnam. (Note: Analyst was initially given a wrong number, 231-921-1031, for Ms. Papenfuss which delayed contact.) Analyst spoke with Ms. Papenfuss on 27 February who explained that her office had been contacted by Thomas Faunce who emailed a letter concerning his meeting in Vietnam and Cambodia with a man he believes is John Hartley Robertson (*Refno 1184*). Ms. Papenfuss said she had contacted JPAC and Adm. Crisp concerning this report.

2. Analyst advised Ms. Papenfuss that DPMO has already been in touch with Mr. Faunce and others regarding this claim. Analyst explained that, based on photos of the alleged American, as well as other biographic information, this man is not an American, but a Vietnamese citizen who has been involved in many similar bogus reports. Analyst explained that the man had been interviewed by U.S. personnel in 2006 and admitted he is a Vietnamese citizen named Dang Than Ngoc. Further, Mr. Faunce took this individual to the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh late in 2008. During one visit the man was fingerprinted. The fingerprints were subsequently sent to the FBI which compared them to those on file for SFC Robertson. In early February, the FBI issued a report concluding the prints taken

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

from Mr. Ngoc, do not match those of John H. Robertson. Ms. Papenfuss thanked Analyst and said she would send DPMO a copy of the material received from Mr. Faunce. Ms. Papenfuss indicated she would appreciate a written response from DPMO. She also said her last contact with Mr. Faunce was 12 February. At that time, Mr. Faunce said he planned to return to Cambodia then go to Vietnam and contact "Robertson" again. He also indicated that "a California Congressman" (NFI) would be going with him.

*Note: Analyst received the material from Ms. Papenfuss in an email shortly after ending the call. The letter from Mr. Faunce is the same one forwarded to DPMO by another source days earlier. It is an approximately 3 ½ page missive in which Mr. Faunce describes the events leading to his meeting with a man he believes to be J. H. Robertson, his interaction with that man, and his belief that the man's claim to be Robertson is valid, and his dissatisfaction with the conclusion of U.S. authorities (including DPMO) that the man is not Robertson, but a Vietnamese citizen. (See Analyst MFR dated 25 February 2009.)*

Recommended Action(s): Tech - Update Source File.

DPMO-L – for JPAC/J2

ERO – Written Response to Sen. Stabenow's Office:

Ms. Joann Papenfuss

3335 s. Airport Rd W Suite 6B

Traverse City, MI 49684

Distro: Chrono, DM, ERO, RA, RA-SEA, Rosenau, Millner, Tech, DPMO-L, McCain (Analyst), Robertson (1184)

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

RECEIVED  
FEB 09 2009



JOINT POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMAND  
HICKAM AIR FORCE BASE

BY: *[Signature]*

DCO (ER)  
JPAC 2009-26

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator  
3335 South Airport Road West Ste 6B  
Traverse City, Michigan 49684

Dear Senator Stabenow,

This is in regard to your letter dated January 28, 2008 sent on behalf of your constituent, Thomas Faunce who informed you of a recent encounter with an individual in Southeast Asia he believes to be an American service member still carried as Missing in Action.

Live-sighting reports are given a high priority by the POW/MIA accounting community. We are forwarding your inquiry to our counterparts at the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) who are responsible for follow up on cases reported by persons living in the United States. They will contact you with the results of their efforts.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have additional questions. I can be reached at the above address or via phone at 808-448-1710 and via e-mail at [johnie.webb@ipac.pacom.mil](mailto:johnie.webb@ipac.pacom.mil).

Sincerely

JOHNIE E. WEBB, JR.  
Deputy to the Commander for  
Public Relations and Legislative Affairs

Cc: DPMO

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

DEBBIE STABENOW  
MICHIGAN

COMMITTEE:  
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY  
BUDGET  
FINANCE

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2204

January 28, 2009

RADM Donna Crisp  
Department of Defense  
310 Worchester Ave, Building 45  
Hickam AFB, HI 96853

RE: Thomas Faunce

I am writing . . .

. . . on behalf of my constituent, Thomas Faunce, who contacted me regarding a recent meeting with an individual in Vietnam and Cambodia who may be an American armed services member who is classified as Missing In Action.

I have enclosed background materials pertinent to the situation and would request that you review the information. I would appreciate being advised of your findings.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact JoAnn Papenfuss in my Northern Michigan office at 231-929-1031. Any written materials can be sent to 3335 South Airport Road West Ste 6B, Traverse City, MI 49684 or by fax at 231-929-1250.

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator

DS:jp

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

I am sitting here at home after a long and tiresome trip to South East Asia. It is very cold here, subzero temperatures, not like the heat I became accustomed to in South East Asia. This trip has been both a great trial and a challenging test. I have been working in Cambodia and the Vietnam border now for a while. We have been putting wells in villages that are in need of good water. This has given us an open door to minister the gospel to those in need. About a year back I was told by the Cambodia Christians and the Vietnamese that there was an American from the Vietnam war that was still living in the highlands of Vietnam. I, like many veterans, have heard similar stories and took this one with a grain of salt. However, by the next trip there was more interest on their part to let me know of this man; so I did acquire who he was and what his name was. I was given the name: "John Hartley Robertson". I came home and checked into this information and found out that this man was shot down in a helicopter on a mission into Lao. I returned alone to Cambodia to see if I could make any contact. I did meet with some individuals who brought me some photos and information. I was not sure of these men, I felt they were middle men using the situation for their own gain. These men had been contacted by the church members because of the information they had in their possession. However, the church had no dealings with them up until this time. I made arrangements for another trip in so that I could meet with John. They told me they could bring him into Cambodia. I agreed and headed back home. My return trip was with my cousin Joe who is from San Antonio, Texas. Joe has gone to many places with me and is a very strong part of the ministry of Frontline Outreach. Joe also was with me on the well projects in this area.

I came into Cambodia a day earlier than Joe and met up with Ratha our friend and interpreter. Joe came in the next day. That same evening we contacted the Vietnamese, they told us we would have to come into Vietnam to meet with John. I was a little discouraged and had a check within my heart about these folks. I felt they were leading us on. The next morning we traveled all the way to the border. When we tried to get into Vietnam we found out we had to go all the way back to Phnom Penh the capital of Cambodia and get our visa. We did not know that they did not give them at the border. To say the least we were discouraged about the delay, however we headed back in hope to get a visa in time and return before ten o'clock evening when the border would close. Our delay seemed to put a damper on the Vietnamese who claimed they had John with them. They told us John and his family who had not been out of the village for many years were getting scared and wanted to return. We encouraged them to wait for us. This situation seemed tense. I felt within that these men were leading us away from where we needed to go. We did make it back to the border before it shut down. It was late evening before we were in Vietnam. The men told us that they had to leave Saigon and go another way, because John's family was scared. By this time I knew within we were being misled into something, we did not know. I was a little irate at this time and told our friend the Cambodian pastor that we needed to change direction. While in Vietnam, the pastor found he had a number to reach John's son by cell phone. He called, found out that they were not with the men who had set up the meeting and that they knew nothing of our meeting in Saigon. We realized we were being set up for a rip-off. We decided to head up to the central high lands where the village was, the place in which the American reportedly had been in. The pastor from Cambodia has met with John and knew exactly where we should go. We ended up in a town up in the hills close to the village. By this time it was early morning. We were informed that they were fearful up in the village of any foreigners coming there, so we decided to wait in town for John and his son to come and meet us. It

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

was not long after that a motorcycle pulled up to where we were staying. It was John and his son. The first time he saw us he came up and hugged us and started weeping. They told us before hand that his mind was not right. He could hardly speak any language. I soon found out that this man who in my heart I believe is John Hartey had a real problem mentally. I do not know what happened the day he was shot down, however knowing war, I knew it had to be very traumatic. I found out from his son that he had been this way as long as he remembered. I was told that when he is at ease that his mind worked better. He showed us his gut wound from the day he was shot down. I do not know how he escaped, except that somehow he was found and stayed in some Buddhist sanctuary for a while in Lao. What we gathered is that he had tried to escape back into Vietnam to reach a US military outpost to try and return home. They informed us that he and some other Vietnamese encountered a battle. They were on a river in a boat and again had to escape for their lives. It is at this time how he met his now wife. They have been up in the hills ever since.

We persuaded John to return to Cambodia with us so that we could try and see what we could do to see that he could return to the United States. His family was very hesitant to let him go. We found out that two years back he was taken across the border and locked in a room until he was interviewed. They said that his life was in jeopardy by the Vietnamese who took him across if he did not agree to stay. He did escape from them and returned to the hills. I met with his daughter Twee, who was deeply concerned for her father. You could see in her face a fear and sadness of what was ahead for her dad. I thought of my daughters and how they would respond to such an arrangement. John told us over and over he wanted to return to America, that he was an American Soldier. He also pointed to his son and daughter in regard to their safety and possibility of them going with him. Truly this is a man caught in two worlds. They agreed to let John go with us accompanied by his son. When we arrived at the border, Joe and I crossed separately. The Vietnamese and Cambodians crossed at another location in which there's no questions asked for a price. I will not disclose much more details on this, for the sake of those involved. We arrived in Phnom Penh at the hotel we often stay at. I was looking forward to what was ahead, but never expected the disinterest we encountered.

The days we spent with John have been one of joy and sadness. I see in this man a real struggle to find his way out, a prisoner of his own mind and circumstances. We sat and reminisced with him as best as we could, and seen him respond to only things most Americans recognize. He even played tic-tac-toe with Joe. We did go to the embassy with him. On the day we arrived, as he walked down the sidewalk to the entrance, behind Joe and I. Joe happened to turn around and was caught off guard by the sight before him. John stopped and was looking up at the American flag with tears in his eyes and than proceeded to salute the flag in a military fashion. He did not know anyone took notice, but we did, it was a sight to see. In his child like mind he mentioned to us Texas, and San Antonio, a place he seemed to know about. One afternoon he pointed to my hat that is similar to a cowboy style and mentioned Mexico and Indians. There were so many little things, his gestures, his politeness. When there was a woman ready to be seated he would get up and offer his seat. His whistle, his stand, his response to things that were recognizable by any American but not custom at all to the Vietnamese. It is hard to explain on paper how to describe this person. John is close to eighty years old. His oldest son is going to be thirty-five. He too is at least six foot tall, though he has more of the

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

Vietnamese features. His daughter Tweek on the other hand is more of the Caucasian side of the family. These must be taken into consideration There is too much at stake to just right this man off. I do not understand how we can, justify not following through on this man. In the military we were taught to leave no one behind, a band of brothers watching out for one another. I do not believe there is a Veteran in this country who would not want to see this followed through on a much greater scale than what has been done. With all this information out, I fear for this mans life.

We were told by our government that there was not enough creditable evidence on this man. They even asked me for some ID from him. I could not understand such a question. I told them he has been an MIA for nearly forty years, where was he supposed to get ID. They had based their decision as far as we know by the interview two years before. You cannot interview a man with dementia and come up with any solid conclusion. However, this is what seems to be the basis of them not following through on this man. I was to say the least shocked by the coldness and lack of interest.

This story is hard to believe and put together, however we have a man who is clearly not of Vietnamese decent lost in a village for all these years, wanting to come out and find out who he really is. He told us by what means he could, that he knows he is John Hartley. Before I came I did contact a fellow soldier and friend of his that did recognize John's photo and said that he was very sure that this man was John. This gave me the encouragement and stamina to press on to find this man. As a Christian and a Veteran I know the importance of the value of one life. I could not just turn away from this because of the difficulties or the lack of evidence. I have been criticized. Some saying I was loosing my perspective. As a Christian in missions the gospel must be first and above all. This I agree with. I cannot help feel that the reaching out to any life is the gospel in action. It is so much more than passing out booklets and bibles, but love in action. How can we turn any one away even at the chance of being foolish to find out the truth?

The frigid cold and Arctic air outside are a reminder of how this all has been handled by our government. As a Vietnam Veteran I find it very hard to accept such apathy in regard to a human life that is very possibly John Hartley Robertson. As I travel this country I have seen the flags, bumper stickers, and signs in remembrance of our POWs, and MIAs. However, it now seems that if one is located that there is not much in remembrance or caring. We will go and dig up the bones at crash sites, but we dare not say one is alive. The Vietnamese government has already stated years back there is no live MIAs. This seems to have closed the books on it. If this is how our government handles such information than truly there are no MIAs, they are all KIAs, because they have already been written off. Regardless of who this man is, there needs to be more than what has been done to prove his identity. More than government officials checking into it, but an independent study from those who have nothing to gain or loose. We spend so much in weapons to take lives why is it we cannot spend just a little to try and save a life of a possible Veteran and by all rights an American hero? We owe all Veterans this right. God help us if we have lost the moral backbone to do the right thing.

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

**By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:16 NKJV)**

**In Christ service  
T.M. Faunce**

**MIA/POW: SFC John Hartley Robertson. MIA in Laos on 20 May 1968 while riding on a covey SOG supply helicopter to secret outpost in Laos. MIA/POW case #1184, Army serial number #58299302. 20 May 68; Robert D. Plato, MSG E-8, Hatchet Force, KIA-RR. John Hartley Robertson, SFC E-7, USASF, FOB-1, Phu Bai, Ops 35 and a Vietnamese Pilot, Co-pilot, and door gunner (names unknown) SFC Robertson and the Vietnamese, MIA-Presumptive finding of death. These individuals were on a King bee helicopter, CH34, 4 miles inside Laos, south of A Shau; on a medical evacuation helicopter and to re-supply a recon team and hatchet force in combat with the enemy when the helicopter came under intense enemy fire, smashed into the trees, and caught fire in the A Shau Valley, Laos. SFC Robertson was the Covey rider who supported RT Alabama on 4 May 68.**

~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~



FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED  
Caveats: NONE

From: Een, Kenneth Civ JPAC J2  
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2009 12:36 PM  
To: Millner, Rodney, Mr., CIV, OSD-DPMO  
Cc: Richeson, Robert Civ JPAC J2; Norris, Dale Lt Col JPAC J2; 'rcmaves@aol.com'; Maves, Robert Civ JPAC J2  
Subject: FW: Possible living POW/MIA (UNCLASSIFIED)

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED  
Caveats: NONE

Rodney, can you please give Ms. Papenfuss a call? Someone called her with information regarding a live POW in Vietnam. Let us know if she or her source have actionable information. As always, thanks! Ken

-----Original Message-----

From: Norris, Dale Lt Col JPAC J2  
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2009 12:34 PM  
To: Een, Kenneth Civ JPAC J2  
Cc: Richeson, Robert Civ JPAC J2  
Subject: FW: Possible living POW/MIA (UNCLASSIFIED)

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED  
Caveats: NONE

FYI.

-----Original Message-----

From: Taylor, Leeanna MC1 JPAC PAO  
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2009 9:26 AM  
To: Richeson, Robert Civ JPAC J2; Webb, Johnie Civ JPAC Dep to the CDR for Pub Rel & Leg Affairs; Norris, Dale Lt Col JPAC J2  
Subject: Possible living POW/MIA (UNCLASSIFIED)

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED  
Caveats: NONE

Good morning,

I received a phone call from a Joann Papenfuss, she received a call from an anonymous person informing her that there is a high possibility that there is a POW/MIA still alive in Vietnam. She would like a call or an email back concerning this information. Her email address is joann\_papenfuss@stabenow.senate.gov  
Her phone number is (231) 921-1031. Thank you for your time.

Very Respectfully,

Leeanna G. Taylor, MC1, USN  
Public Affairs Office

1

Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command  
310 Worcester Ave, Bldg 45  
Hickam AFB, HI 96853-5530  
Office: (808) 448-1940  
Fax: (808) 448-1998  
www.jpac.pacom.mil  
"Until they are home"

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY